PZ
10
.3
.P994
Th

FT MEADE
GenColl

# THREE LITTLE KITTENS

KATHARINE PYLE

Class PZ10

Book .3

Copyright No. P994

COPYRIGHT DEPOSIT.

Th

# THREE LITTLE KITTENS

*Jazbury, Fluffy and Yowler*

# THREE LITTLE KITTENS

WRITTEN AND ILLUSTRATED
BY
KATHARINE PYLE
Author of "Six Little Ducklings,"
"Two Little Mice," etc.

NEW YORK
DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY
1920

PZ 10
.3
.P99
Th

COPYRIGHT, 1920,
BY DODD, MEAD AND COMPANY, INC.

Price $1.75

VAIL-BALLOU COMPANY
BINGHAMTON AND NEW YORK

©Cl. A601567

NOV 16 1920

no 1

# ILLUSTRATIONS


PAGE

Jazbury, Fluffy and Yowler . . . . *Frontispiece*

The cat people always had very good meals . . 4

Fluffy set out along the top of the fence, walking very slowly . . . . . 10

The rat looked at him with a wicked grin . . 20

He knocked against a tin pan that clattered down with a tremendous din . . . . . 26

He dreamed he was trying to run down a road toward a wood and a dog was after him—two dogs 34

It seemed as though any moment the dog's teeth might close on the kitten . . . . . 40

Fluffy dropped the bird and put his paw on it . 50

He turned on them so fiercely that they were frightened . . . . . 62

They were almost hidden by the dusty weeds . 68

He spit and mewed and fought, but she held him there . . . . . 72

They saw Jazbury dragging something in from the shed beyond . . . . . 90

# THREE LITTLE KITTENS

# THREE LITTLE KITTENS

JAZBURY came scampering gaily up the stairs to where his mother and Aunt Tabby were sitting on the window-sill washing their faces and cleaning their fur.

Jazbury was a small black kitten with white markings on his face and breast, and soft little white paws. Soft as those little paws were there were sharp, needle claws hidden in their velvet, and Jazbury knew how to use them when necessary, too.

Mother Bunch's tail hung down from the window-seat, waving softly. It looked almost like a mouse, so soft and grey. Jazbury made a jump, and caught it with his claws. His mother growled and drew her tail up and curled it around her.

Jazbury jumped up after it, and tried to tease his mother into playing with him.

"Jazbury, you haven't washed yourself this morning," said his aunt severely. "Look at your paws. You've been in the coal-bin again, you naughty kitten."

"Well, I thought I heard a mouse there," mewed Jazbury.

"A mouse! What would a mouse be doing in the coal-bin? No, you just wanted an excuse for clambering about among the coal and making it rattle. And now look how dirty you are."

"Sit down and make yourself clean, Jazbury," said his mother. "No; let my tail alone. I'm not going to play with you. And if you want any breakfast you'd better make haste to wash yourself. I will *not* have such a dirty kitten eating from the saucer with me."

Jazbury sat down and began to wash his face with one of his grimy little paws.

His aunt sighed. "Paws first," she said. "You'll only make yourself dirtier if you try to wash your face before you clean your paws."

"Oh, dear me!" mewed Jazbury crossly.

"I really don't know what's going to become of you if you don't keep yourself cleaner," his aunt went on. "I'm really afraid something terrible may happen to you. I knew a cat once who wouldn't wash herself, and so her mistress used to do it for her with *water,* so she was wet all over. Water and soap! And a sponge! How would you feel if that happened to you some day? And it may unless you learn to keep yourself cleaner."

Jazbury was frightened at the thought that such a thing might happen to him, too, if he didn't keep himself clean, and he set about washing himself in earnest. First he washed his paws, and after he had cleaned them he cleaned his face, licking his paw with his little pink

tongue, and curling it round over his furry little cheeks and forehead and chin and even behind his ears. By breakfast time he was clean enough to be allowed to eat with his mother and Aunt Tabby.

The human people and the cat people had their breakfast at the same time. The human people had theirs in the dining-room, and the cat people had theirs in the pantry. The cat people always had very good meals; bread and milk, and fish twice a week, and sometimes meat and potatoes.

"What's the use of my bothering to catch mice?" Jazbury often said. "I get all I want to eat anyway."

And his aunt would answer, "You ought to feel grateful enough for your good meals to *want* to catch mice for people."

But Jazbury paid little attention to such ad-

*The cat people always had very good meals*

vice. All he cared for was having a good time and play about, and if mice had to be caught he left it to his mother and Aunt Tabby to do it.

## II

JAZBURY'S best friend was a little white kitten named Fluffy. Fluffy lived in the house next door to Jazbury's.

At the other side of Jazbury's house was an open lot. The gentlemen cats of the neighbourhood had a club that met in this lot every night. It was a singing club, but sometimes the cats quarrelled among themselves, and were very noisy. Mother Bunch and Aunt Tabby said they wished the cats would meet some other place; but Jazbury liked to hear them. He wished he were old enough to belong to the club, and sing and fight, and stay out all night the way they did. But he was still only a soft, playful little kitten, who had not even caught his first mouse as yet.

Once Jazbury had climbed up on the fence,

and jumped over into the lot. There he had prowled about among the weeds, and chased grasshoppers, and shiny black crickets. It was great fun.

Another kitten was hunting there, too, but he was hunting birds. He laughed at Jazbury for catching grasshoppers. He told Jazbury his name was Yowler, and that he belonged to the baker who liver further down the street. Yowler had a broad, ugly face and a stubby tail, and his fur looked dirty and uncared for. He was a yellow cat.

Jazbury liked him because he was strong and big and bold, but when Jazbury told his mother about Yowler she said she did not want Jazbury to play with him. She said she knew all about him; that he was a very coarse, noisy cat, and she told Jazbury he must not go over in the lot again.

Jazbury was allowed to go over into Fluffy's yard whenever he wanted to. Mother Bunch

and Aunt Tabby both liked Fluffy. They thought he was a very nice, well-behaved little kitten.

One day when Jazbury climbed up on the fence that separated his yard from Fluffy's he saw his little friend sitting down on the kitchen steps, watching something in the grass below him. He was so intent on what he saw that he did not notice Jazbury.

"Hello, Fluffy!" mewed Jazbury.

Fluffy jumped. Then he looked around.

"Hello!"

"What you got there?" asked Jazbury curiously.

"A toad."

"Going to catch it?"

"No, I don't like them. They haven't any fur, and I don't like the feel of them."

"Well, come on up here. I want to show you something."

Fluffy climbed up a step-ladder that was leaning against the fence.

"What are you going to show me?"

"Do you see this fence? Well, I walked all the way round on the top of it yesterday, and never fell off once."

Fluffy looked at the fence in silence for a moment or so. Then he said, "That's not so much to do."

"I guess it is, too. You couldn't do it."

"Yes, I could, if I wanted to."

"Well, let's see you."

"I don't want to."

"You're afraid."

"No, I'm not, either."

"Yes, you are, too.

"Fraidy cat! Fraidy cat!
Never catch a mouse or rat."

"I *can;* I *can* catch mice. And I can walk on the fence, too. I'll show you."

"Walk to the post and back and I'll give you a chicken bone I found down back of the rain-barrel."

"All right; it's a promise. Now watch me."

Fluffy set out along the top of the fence, walking very slowly and carefully, one paw before the other.

"Hurry up! hurry up! No fair walking so slowly," said Jazbury.

"Yes, it is fair, too. And don't you mew at me."

Fluffy reached the post safely, and then tried to turn. But that was not such an easy matter. He lost his balance. His tail waved wildly. His claws clutched the fence. He teetered back and forth, and then, with a loud mew, he half jumped, half fell, down on the flower bed below.

Jazbury laughed and laughed, the way kittens do. You wouldn't have known he was laugh-

*Fluffy set out along the top of the fence, walking very slowly*

ing. You couldn't have heard it, but a cat or kitten could. It hurt Fluffy's feelings to be laughed at.

"I don't care. I don't believe you could do it, either," he mewed.

"Now watch me!" said Jazbury.

He ran gaily out along the fence top with never a pause or mis-step. He ran all the way down one side without stopping, and then started across the back fence toward the other side.

Now back of Jazbury's yard was another yard, and a very rough boy lived there. The boy was out in the yard now. He was squirting a hose, and another boy with a very dirty face was there with him.

"Hi!" cried the dirty-faced boy. "Look at that kitten walking along the fence."

"Yeh!" answered the other. "I'm going to squirt the hose on him!"

"Go ahead!" cried the other. "See what he'll do."

Jazbury was very much frightened. He began to run. He might have jumped down off the fence, but he never thought of that. He ran as fast as he could, but before he could reach the other side a torrent of cold water struck him, almost sweeping him off the fence. The boy was squirting the hose on him as he had said.

Jazbury tried to hold fast to the fence; he tried to yowl, but the rush of water filled his mouth—his eyes—his ears. Blinded and drenched, he was finally carried off the fence by it, and landed in the yard below—his own yard, luckily. There the fence protected him.

Fluffy looked on, horrified by what he saw.

Jazbury struggled to his feet, and ran toward the house, trailing water after him.

"Mew, miew!" he cried. "Oh, Momma!

Momma! Come quick! Miew! Miew! Miew!"

Mother Bunch heard him crying, and burst open the screen door of the kitchen and came running to meet him.

"What is it? What is it?" she cried. "What's the matter, Jazbury?"

"Oh, I'm so wet. I'm so w-w-wet!" he shivered.

"Oh, my child, come over here!" Mother Bunch hurried him over to a warm, sunny corner beside the kitchen steps, and began to dry him with her pink, rough tongue.

"But how did it happen?" she asked again. "Did you fall into a bucket?"

"I didn't fall into anything except the yard. It was some boys and they put water on me," and Jazbury told his mother the whole story.

Aunt Tabby sat by and listened gravely. "Well, Jazbury, it's really no more than I ex-

pected," said she. "It's just as I told you. If you won't wash yourself you'll get washed by some one else. And I must say you're looking cleaner than you've looked for many a day."

His mother said nothing. She thought Jazbury had been punished enough by the drenching without being lectured as well.

## III

"JAZBURY, I've found a fresh mouse-hole," said Aunt Tabby one day. "It's in the cupboard under the sink, and the cook has left the door open. Come with me and I'll show it to you. I have great hopes the mouse may come out before so very long, and if you sit there and watch you may catch him."

"Aunt Tabby! Oh, I don't want to watch mouse-holes today," mewed Jazbury. "I told Fluffy I would come out and play with him. Mayn't I, Mother? I said I would, and I don't want to sit there in the cupboard and watch. Maybe the mouse wouldn't come out anyway, and Fluffy expects me."

"You always have some excuse, Jazbury," said his aunt, severely. "If you had your way

you would never do anything but play. But as long as you have to learn to mouse some time, I don't see why today isn't as good a time to begin as any."

"Yes, Jazbury. Go with your aunt," said his mother. "And don't look sulky. I'm sure you ought to be very grateful to her for telling you about the hole."

"But I don't want to sit in the cupboard all morning. And *I* can find holes, too. I found one out in the shed yesterday. A big, big one. I'd rather watch that one if I have to watch any."

"Very well," said his aunt. "You may do as you please about it, but I think you'd be much more likely to catch a mouse in the cupboard."

"I'd rather watch in the shed."

His mother, too, said he might do as he chose about it, but neither she nor Aunt Tabby had much hopes he would catch anything.

"I'll have to go out and tell Fluffy I can't play this morning," said Jazbury.

"Don't be long," said his mother. "Come straight back as soon as you have told him."

Jazbury promised he would, and then he ran out into the kitchen and mewed for the cook to open the outside door for him.

"Bother those cats!" scolded the cook. "It takes all my time letting them in and out."

She left the soup she was stirring and came over and opened the door, and the kitten ran past her out into the sunny yard.

Fluffy was sitting on the top step of the ladder, looking over the fence and waiting for him.

"I can't come out to play with you now. I have to catch a mouse for Mother and Aunt Tabby."

Fluffy was much interested. "Where are you going to catch it?" he asked.

"In the shed. I found the hole myself. It's

a big, *big*, BIG hole. I guess the biggest mouse you ever saw lives in it. I guess you'd be scared if you tried to catch a mouse as big as that one; wouldn't you?"

"Maybe I would and maybe I wouldn't."

"I know you would."

"I've caught some big mice, too," said Fluffy.

"Not as big as this one, though. I'll show him to you after I catch him."

Jazbury ran back and mewed for the cook to open the door again. The cook was so angry she would not open it for quite a while, but Jazbury mewed so loudly that at last she was obliged to for the sake of peace. When she did open it she cried, "Scat!" at him, and pushed out her foot at him as he ran past her.

Jazbury did not mind that. He hurried on past her, and out into the shed, the door of which was luckily open.

The hole he had found was down back of a

bench, and some unused buckets were piled up in front of it.

Jazbury crouched down in the shadow of the buckets. He crouched there for a long time without moving, and with his eyes fixed patiently on the hole. Aunt Tabby would have been pleased and surprised if she could have seen how still he kept.

After a while, however, he began to feel discouraged. He wondered whether there were any mouse there after all. Maybe Aunt Tabby was right, and he should have watched in the cupboard.

Just as he was thinking this he heard a scratching, brushing sound inside the hole, and a grey head with a pointed nose and two gleaming round black eyes appeared at the mouth of the hole.

Jazbury quivered all over as he crouched still lower and made ready to leap upon the mouse.

Then suddenly he stiffened and stared with big eyes. Surely no mouse had ever had such a big head as that. After the head followed a great fat body, and a long, *long,* LONG tail. The mouse was not a mouse at all, but a huge grey rat.

Jazbury was terrified. His tail grew big and every separate hair stood on end.

The rat looked at him with a wicked grin. "Ho, ho! So you thought you'd catch me, did you?" cried the rat. "I knew you were there. I heard you and I smelled you. You thought you'd catch me, did you? Well, here I am! Now let's see you catch me."

The rat sidled over toward Jazbury, and just as fast as he sidled over Jazbury backed away. He tried to spit and growl, but he was too frightened.

"Thought you'd catch me! Maybe I'll catch

*The rat looked at him with a wicked grin*

you. I like little kittens for supper. Like 'em as much as cheese."

He gave a heavy jump toward Jazbury, and his sharp teeth showed in a wicked grin.

"Momma! Momma! Aunt Tabby! Come quick," mewed Jazbury shrilly.

Suddenly the rat started. His eyes glared past Jazbury toward the kitchen door. A look of terror came over his face. He wheeled about and scuttled back toward his hole.

At the same moment there was an angry growl, and a grey shape shot past Jazbury. It was Aunt Tabby. She had heard Jazbury's cry of distress and had flown to help him. She rushed at the rat and made a wild grab at him. But he was too quick for her. Already he was disappearing in his hole. She did catch his tail, but it slipped away from her and the next moment the rat was gone.

Jazbury began to mew pitifully.

"Why, Jazbury, what are you crying about now? You're all safe," said his aunt.

"Mew! mew! mew! Oh, he frightened me so! I never knew there were mouses like that!"

"Mouse! That wasn't a mouse, kitten! That was a rat, and a very big and savage rat, too. No wonder you were frightened. You'll have to be a bigger kitten before you can grapple with a rat. I've been trying to have a chance at him myself, but I've never even seen him till today. He always stays hidden when I'm around."

Aunt Tabby talked on, comforting the kitten until at last he stopped trembling and his hairs smoothed themselves down into the usual smoothness.

"Now, Jazbury, perhaps you'll watch one of my mouse-holes," she ended. "I promise you nothing but mice ever come out of it."

"Very well. And thank you, Aunt Tabby," said Jazbury meekly. And he followed her back from the shed into the kitchen, wondering what he would say to Fluffy when he saw him again, and how he could explain not having caught anything after all.

However, he need not have been troubled. Fluffy was such a gentle little kitten that he never would tease or make fun of any one, no matter what they did or didn't do.

## IV

THE next morning Aunt Tabby again offered to show Jazbury the mouse-hole in the cupboard.

Jazbury looked very sulky. He was ashamed to try to beg off again, particularly after what Aunt Tabby had done for him the day before, but it seemed hard to have to give up another morning of play.

He followed Aunt Tabby into the kitchen. The cook had gone to market and the door of the cupboard was ajar. Aunt Tabby pushed it open and led the way into the darkness where the pots and pans were stored.

"Here's the hole, Jazbury," she told him in a low voice. "I have a feeling the mouse is out,

and if you only keep perfectly quiet I feel sure it will try to get back into the hole again. That will be your chance, and I shall be very much disappointed if you do not catch your first mouse this morning.'

"I don't feel as if I could catch anything to-day," said Jazbury sulkily.

"Now, Jazbury, don't go about it that way. If you don't catch it, it will be your own fault, and I shall feel very much provoked with you."

Then Aunt Tabby went away and left him there. She did not go very far, however. She was so anxious to have him get the mouse that she lingered close by where she could hear everything that went on in the cupboard—though this the kitten did not know.

Jazbury crouched down in the shadow of the kettle as his aunt bade him, and kept perfectly quiet with his eyes fixed on the hole. Not even a whisker stirred. He *did* wish he could catch

that mouse, if only to show Aunt Tabby what he could do if he chose. How pleased and surprised she and his mother would be if he were really to get one. Outside the kitchen was very still. The clock tick-tocked and the kettle simmered on the stove.

Suddenly Jazbury heard a little scratching, scraping sound back of one of the pots. It was so very little and faint that only a cat's ears could have heard it. Jazbury's eyes grew round, and his muscles stiffened ready for a leap.

Suddenly out from behind the pot whined a winged grasshopper. It flew so close to Jazbury it almost brushed his nose.

Forgetting all about the mouse, Jazbury made a leap for it. He knocked against a tin pan that clattered down with a tremendous din. At the same moment a little grey shape flitted out from behind him like a tiny shadow, slipped across the floor and disappeared down the

*He knocked against a tin pan that clattered down with a tremendous din*

mouse-hole. It was the mouse, and Jazbury had lost it.

Almost at the same moment Jazbury received a sharp box on the ear that almost upset him.

"You *bad* boy!" cried his aunt. "I'm just all out of patience with you. Even when a mouse runs right by under your nose you can't catch it."

Jazbury began to mew. "Well, you don't have to box my ears, anyway. I couldn't help it."

"Yes, you could. That's what provokes me so. Fluffy's not half as quick and active as you, and look at the way he catches mice. I'm ashamed of you."

Mother Bunch's round furry face appeared at the door looking in at them. "What's the matter? Has Jazbury been doing anything?"

"No, he *hasn't* been doing it, that's the mat-

ter," and Aunt Tabby poured out the whole story, while Jazbury stood by looking both sullen and ashamed.

"I don't care; I couldn't help it," he said.

"Don't say 'don't care' to me," said Mother Bunch. "It isn't respectful—not to me, nor to your aunt either. The mouse has gone, I suppose, so there's no use in your staying here. You may go out on the kitchen steps. But you mustn't play around or go over to see Fluffy. That is your punishment for being so careless, and disrespectful, too."

# V

JAZBURY sat out on the kitchen steps and sulked. He did not think Aunt Tabby had any right to box his ears. And instead of being sorry for him his mother had scolded him. It wasn't fair. He was always getting scolded and punished. Well, he'd just run away. That's what he'd do. He'd run away and never come back. Then they'd be sorry. Maybe they'd cry. He just wished they would. He'd be glad if they cried.

Suddenly Fluffy's little furry white face peered over the fence. "Hello, Jazbury."

Jazbury did not answer at once. Then he said, " 'Lo!"

"What's the matter?"

"Nothing the matter."

"What you looking so cross about?"

"Nothing; ain't looking cross."

Fluffy climbed over the fence and came and sat down by Jazbury. He looked at him once or twice, but he did not say anything. He was rather afraid of Jazbury when Jazbury was in one of his tempers.

"Can't you come over in my yard to play?" he asked at last.

"Don't want to."

At this moment there was a scratching sound on the fence between the yard and the lot, and a third kitten, a large yellow one, scrambled to the top of one of the fence posts and seated himself on it. It was Yowler.

"Hello, Jaz!" he called down, in the yowling voice that had given him his name.

"Hello!" answered Jazbury, still very sulky.

The newcomer took no notice of Fluffy.

"I got sumpin to tell you."

"What?"

"Can't tell you here. Come on over in the lot and I'll tell you."

"Can't."

"Why not?"

" 'Cause!"

"Oh, come on!"

"I tell you I can't. I got to sit here for awhile."

"Why?"

"*Because,* I tell you.

Yowler jumped down into the yard and came over and seated himself beside Jazbury. Fluffy drew away. The newcomer was very dirty.

"You gwan home, kit," said Yowler to Fluffy. "Me and Jaz want to talk."

"I shan't go home unless I want to," answered Fluffy, bristling up. "I don't have to go; do I, Jazbury?"

"No. If you have anything to say, Yowler, say it."

"I'm afraid this kit'll tell."

"Oh, go ahead!" cried Jazbury impatiently. "He won't tell; will you, Fluffy?"

"Of course not."

"Well—" Yowler paused and looked carefully round to see that no one was listening. "I'm going to run away."

Jazbury started violently. "Run away!" How strange for Yowler to say that. It was exactly the thing he had been thinking about.

"Yeh! Run away. I'm tired of sticking around in the baker's shop and catching his mice for him. Let him catch his own mice if he wants 'em. I'm tired of it, I tell you."

"Where are you going to run to?"

"Somewhere. I think maybe I'll go and live in the woods for awhile. Want to come along? It's going to be fine."

"The woods!" broke in Fluffy. "You couldn't live there. You'd be rained on. You'd get *wet*."

"Oh, you keep quiet," mewed Yowler roughly. "I ain't talking to you. Don't you want to come, Jaz? There's lots of places to live,—hollow trees and things; and birds, and field mice, and fish; we'd just have a great time."

"But you don't know how to get there," said Jazbury.

"Sure I do. Some man brought me in from the country when I was a kitten; a *little* kitten, I mean; we came past a wood, and I could find my way back there just as easy as not if I tried. Come on, Jaz. It's going to be fine, I tell you."

"I'd just as lief as not," said Jazbury slowly. "When are you going?"

"Tomorrow morning, I guess; just as soon as the baker opens his shop and I can get you."

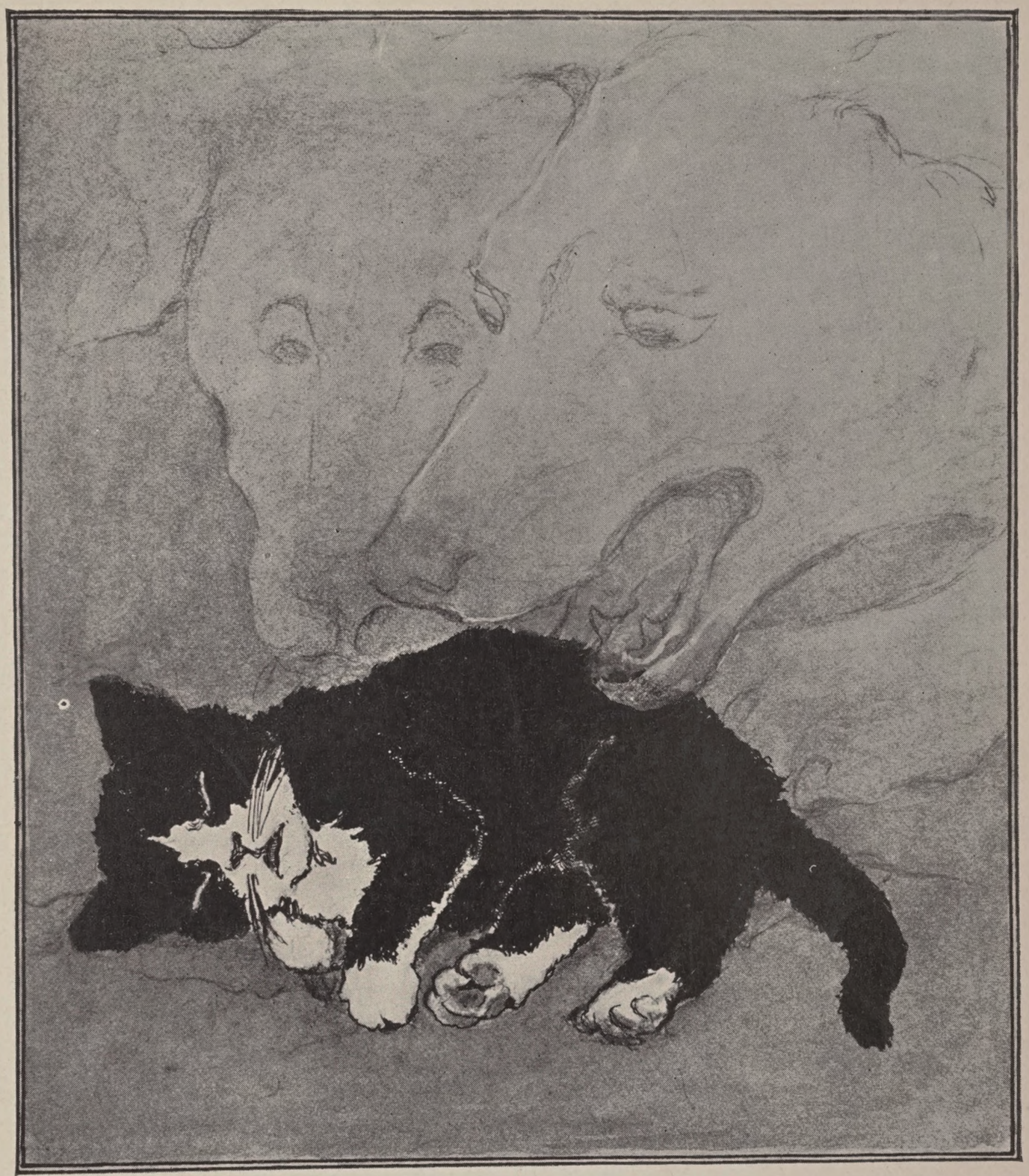
"You come, too, Fluffy," cried Jazbury suddenly. "I'll go if you will."

"Oh, no!" mewed Fluffy, and Yowler chimed in, "Oh, he can't go. He's too much of a mamma's pet. We don't want him."

"Yes, we do, too. And I won't go unless he will. Come on, Fluffy. We'll have lots of fun. And we needn't stay unless we want to. Come on!"

It took a great deal of persuasion before Fluffy would agree to the plan, but at last he said he would go if Yowler would promise to let him come home any time he wanted to. He also made Yowler promise that they would come straight back again that very day if they could not find a cave or a hollow tree for shelter before nightfall.

It was arranged that they should all three meet in the lot the next morning as soon after



*He dreamed he was trying to run down a road toward a wood and a dog was after him—two dogs*

breakfast as possible. Yowler wanted them to start before breakfast, but to this Fluffy would not consent. Jazbury, too, thought it would be well to have a last saucer of milk before they set out. They would not be apt to find much milk in the wood.

That night Jazbury was very restless. He was too excited to sleep well. When he did doze off at last he dreamed he was trying to run down a road toward a wood and a dog was after him—two dogs—three dogs. He dug his nails into the ground and tried to pull himself along, but his paws seemed to have grown fast to the ground. Then the first dog was upon him, had caught him—was crying in his ear, "Jazbury, Jazbury, wake up. You must be having a nightmare, you are mewing so."

He opened his eyes and there he was, safe in the warm, snug home cellar, and Aunt Tabby

was patting him, and telling him to wake up. Jazbury was still trembling and panting from the terror of his dream.

"What were you dreaming, dear?" asked his mother.

"Oh, nothing," said Jazbury. "Just something about dogs"; and then he snuggled up against his mother and went to sleep again, and this time he slept quietly and undisturbed by dreams.

# VI

WHEN Jazbury awoke the next morning the sun was shining in through the cellar window, the birds were singing, and the air was full of dewy freshness. His ugly dreams of the night before were all forgotten. There could not have been a more wonderful day for three little kittens to start out on their adventures.

The three of them met in the lot soon after breakfast, as they had agreed. Yowler at once took command. "Now, kits," said he, "we won't go all together in a bunch. That would look queer, and some one would be sure to notice us. I'll start off first; Fluff can come next, and then Jaz. You keep about half a square behind me, Fluffy, and Jaz about half a square

behind you. Then you can see which way I go, but nobody will think we're together."

To this plan the others agreed.

"Suppose we meet some dogs?" said Fluffy.

"If you do, you'll just have to do the best you can. Run up an alley, or climb a fence or something. Now come on! We'll go as far as the edge of the lot together."

The three little kittens stole away through the weeds, and when they came to the edge of the lot Jazbury and Fluffy stopped. They watched Yowler cross to the other side of the street and turn a corner. Then, after a moment or so, Fluffy followed, then Jazbury.

The others were still in sight when Jazbury turned the corner, Yowler quite a distance up the street, and Fluffy not so far.

Two women with brooms in their hands were sweeping their pavements and gossiping together as they swept. "Look at that kitten,"

said one of them, as Jazbury ran past them. "That's the third kitten that's gone by in the last few minutes."

"I know. I noticed that," replied the other. "Funny! Wonder where they come from!"

As Jazbury neared the next corner he heard a sound of voices in loud talk, and then the bark of a dog. Some boys were coming that way, and a dog was with them. They were just around the corner.

Luckily there was an alleyway close by. Jazbury ran into it and crouched there, and a moment later a group of rough-looking boys passed by it, with a couple of dogs at their heels. Luckily none of them thought of looking into the alleyway. Jazbury waited till the sound of voices had died away, and then he came out and ran on again. Yowler and Fluffy were far ahead now, and he had to hurry to get near them again.

A little later Fluffy had an adventure that might have been very serious. He was going past a little brown wooden house when the door opened, and a little girl came out, followed by an ugly-looking cur. Almost at once the dog saw Fluffy. He gave a sort of half yelp, half bark, and started after him. Fluffy saw him coming. There was no fence, and no alleyway where he could take shelter. Fortunately there was a tree a little further down the street, and it was toward this tree that Fluffy ran for his life, his tail big, and every hair on end.

The dog was close at his heels when he dashed up the tree. He clung there, part way up, the dog leaping and yelping below him. Jazbury watched from behind a flight of steps, trembling and terrified. It seemed as though any moment the dog's teeth might close on the kitten. Fluffy clung there, afraid to try to climb higher, lest he lose his hold, and fall back into the dog's jaws.

*It seemed as though any moment the dog's teeth might close on the kitten*

The little girl had been shouting at the dog, and now she found a stick, and running up she beat him until he whined and ran a little distance away. He did not go far, however, but stood watching eagerly while the little girl tried to coax Fluffy to come down to her. But this Fluffy would not do. He had now scrambled up to a crotch of the tree, and sat there mewing.

Presently the door of the house opened, and a woman looked out. "Pansy," she called to the child, "you go on and get me the yeast cake. I'm waiting for it."

"But, mother, there's a kitten up this tree."

"I can't help it if there is, You go on, and hurry, too. It's almost school time."

Reluctantly the little girl left the tree and went on down the street and around the next corner. Fortunately she took the dog with her.

Carefully and warily Jazbury crept along a gutter to the foot of the tree. "Hurry, Fluffy!"

he mewed. "Come down. We must get away before the dog comes back."

"Oh, I'm afraid!" wailed Fluffy. "I want to go home. Mew! Mew!"

"Don't stop to cry," called Jazbury impatiently. "You can't get home now, and if you don't hurry the dog will be back again."

So urged, Fluffy managed to half scramble, half fall down the tree, and he and Jazbury made off down the street as fast as they could go.

They had come almost to the end of the village now, and Yowler was waiting for them.

"What kept you so long?" he mewed crossly. "I've been waiting and waiting for you."

"A dog almost caught Fluffy," said Jazbury; and he told Yowler the story of Fluffy's adventures. "Wasn't that terrible?" asked Jazbury.

"Oh, I don't know. He didn't get him, anyway," said Yowler impatiently. "We'll get to the fields in a minute now, and then we can all

keep together. There won't be any one to see us."

A little later they were out of the village altogether. Before them lay the sunny breadth of the country, a meadow and a stream, a field, and far away the dark edge of a shady wood.

The kittens slipped through a fence and into the deep grass of the meadow. Insects whined about them. A butterfly fluttered by, so close above them that when Jazbury leaped for it he almost caught it. He would have liked to chase some of the insects that flitted about, but Yowler told him to wait. "There are plenty of other things to catch," he said. "Bigger things that we can really eat."

"Isn't it fun, Fluffy?" cried Jazbury. "Aren't you glad we came?"

"Yes, it is fun," answered Fluffy; but he did not seem quite as joyous over it as Jazbury.

A little later Yowler crept away from them

through the grasses. They saw him pounce, and a moment later he came back with a little field-mouse in his mouth.

"What did I tell you?" he purred, proudly. "Guess we won't starve here. The fields are full of them."

They divided the field-mouse amongst them, and though none of them were hungry it was fun to eat out there in the open meadow with the blue sky overhead, and the warm wind ruffling their fur.

They went on again presently, taking their time, and making side excursions through the grasses, or stopping to rest and sun themselves in the more open places.

Not until late afternoon did they come to the wood. By that time they were hungry again. Fluffy managed to catch a small bird, which delighted the other two.

"Isn't he a fine catcher? What did I tell you?" boasted Jazbury.

After they had eaten the bird Yowler told the others to wait where they were, while he went on to find a place for them to sleep.

After he left them the two younger kittens dropped into silence. Dusk was drawing down. How big and dark and lonely it seemed in the wood. Jazbury thought of his mother and Aunt Tabby. They must have missed him by now. How troubled they would be. There would be good milk in the saucer in the pantry. They must be eating their supper by now. But maybe they would be too sad and sorry to eat.

Fluffy snuggled up close against him. "Jazbury!" he whispered.

"Yes."

"Don't you wish we were home?"

"Well, I wouldn't mind it."

"Let's go home. Let's go before Yowler gets back."

"No; that would be mean. But maybe tomorrow,—only I don't know the way."

"Miaw-aw-aw!" came Yowler's loud voice, breaking harshly through the silence of the wood. "Come on over here, kits; I've found a fine place to sleep."

The other kittens hurried toward the place from which his voice had come, and found him standing in front of a hollow tree. There was a bed of moss and dry leaves in the hollow, and it was snug and dry. The three kittens crept into it and snuggled down together, and soon they were fast asleep, worn out by their journey and the adventures they had passed through.

# VII

JAZBURY opened his eyes and looked about him. For a moment he could not think where he was. Instead of the white-washed walls and beams of the cellar, the sides of the tree arched up above him; and there was Fluffy cuddled up close against him, instead of Mother Bunch and Aunt Tabby.

Then he remembered. He had run away. He was in the wood. But where was Yowler? He had been there when Jazbury went to sleep. Surely Yowler had not gone away and deserted them.

"Fluffy!" he mewed.

Without opening his eyes Fluffy gave a sleepy little answering mew. He stretched himself and yawned, showing his little pink tongue

curled up inside his mouth. Then he opened his eyes.

"Why, Jazbury!" he said in a surprised tone. He looked about him in a startled way. "Why —why—I'd forgotten we ran away. Where's Yowler?"

"I don't know. Let's call him."

But at this moment Yowler came strolling around from behind the tree. "Hello, kits!" he said. He had a comfortable, lazy look. He was licking his lips, and there was a tiny feather sticking to one of his whiskers.

"Where have you been?" asked Jazbury.

"Oh, I just went out to look about."

"Well, I'm hungry. What shall we do about breakfast?"

"Yes; what shall we do about breakfast?" chimed in Fluffy.

"Oh, you'll have to catch something. There's plenty here in the woods."

"But aren't you going to help us?" asked Jazbury anxiously.

"No. I don't feel hungry. You kits go ahead. You won't have any trouble about it. If I want anything I'll catch it later on."

"But I don't know *how* to catch things. I never learned," said Jazbury.

"All the worse for you, but I can't help it," said Yowler cruelly.

Fluffy had been looking sharply at Yowler. Now he said, "Yowler, there's a feather on your whiskers."

Yowler started. "Oh, is there?" he said, and he hastily wiped it off with his paw. "You'd better hurry up if you want to catch anything." he added. "I'm sleepy. Guess I'll take another snooze."

He went inside the tree and curled himself up in the warm spot that Jazbury and Fluffy had just left, and closed his eyes. The two smaller

kittens stood looking at him for a moment.

"Come on, Jazbury!" mewed Fluffy. "Let's go and look for something to eat."

The two little kittens wandered away from the tree and on deeper into the wood. Jazbury felt very much hurt that Yowler would not come with them. He didn't see why he wasn't hungry, too.

"I know why he wasn't hungry," said Fluffy mysteriously.

"Why?"

"Oh, I'll tell you some time."

"Why won't you tell me now?"

"I don't want to; but I'll tell you some time."

Jazbury looked about him. "I don't see wherever we're to get anything to eat," he mewed.

"I do, right now," whispered Fluffy. "Hist! Keep still now."

He crept silently forward through the bushes,

*Fluffy dropped the bird and put his paw on it*

there was a sudden leap—a squeak—a flutter, and a moment later Fluffy came back proudly carrying in his mouth a young bird he had killed.

"Oh, goody!" cried Jazbury,"I just love bird, and I've never tasted it but once. Aunt Tabby caught one in the yard at home and gave me a piece. Won't Yowler be pleased? Come on! Let's hurry back with it and all have breakfast."

Fluffy dropped the bird and put his paw on it. "I'm not going to give Yowler any," he declared.

"Not give Yowler any! Oh, Fluffy! Why not?"

"Because. Now I'll tell you what I was going to tell you awhile ago, and didn't. I'm just sure Yowler caught a bird this morning and ate it all himself before we were awake."

Jazbury could hardly believe such a thing could be true. "Oh, Fluffy! He wouldn't be so mean!" he cried.

"Well, I'm sure of it. Don't you remember the feather on his whiskers? Anyway, you might as well eat your share of the bird for I shan't give Yowler even a single bone, whether you eat any of it or not."

So the two little friends sat there on the soft moss and divided the bird between them. How delicious it was! The kittens purred and smacked their lips over it, it was so good, but all the while Jazbury had an unhappy feeling that they were treating Yowler very badly, for he *couldn't* have done such a mean thing as to catch a bird and eat it without telling them a word about it.

After they had finished eating Fluffy sat down and began to wash himself. "You'd better wash yourself, too, Jazbury," he said. "Just look how dirty and dusty your fur is."

"I don't care," mewed Jazbury. "I didn't come out in the woods to wash myself, and I

don't mean to do it. I'm never, never, never going to wash myself until we go home again."

"You'd feel a whole lot more comfortable if you were nice and clean," said Fluffy, and he went on washing himself until his fur fairly shone with whiteness.

Then the two kittens strolled back toward the tree. Jazbury was almost ashamed to face Yowler. Anyway, it was not his fault. It had not been his bird.

Suddenly Fluffy stopped, his eyes wide and excited. "There, look at that!" he cried.

"What?" asked Jazbury.

"There! Under that bush!"

Jazbury looked, and then he saw a little heap of feathers lying under the bush,—a wing—a tail. Fluffy went over to where they lay and sniffed about. "I knew it," he mewed. "Yowler has been here. This is where he killed the

bird and ate it. Now you'll believe me, I guess."

Jazbury, too, went over to the bush and sniffed about, and he could very easily tell that Yowler had been there. It made him feel very sad that their companion should have played such a trick upon them.

When they came to the hollow tree they found Yowler still fast asleep. Their coming awakened him. "Did you catch anything?" he asked eagerly.

"Yes, we caught a bird."

"Where is it?" Yowler sprang to his feet. "Did you bring it home?"

Jazbury and Fluffy looked at each other. Then Fluffy said, "No; we ate it."

"Ate it! Without giving me any? What d'you mean by that? Ain't we pardners? Here I bring you along with me, and show you a good place to sleep, and you go and eat up all

the breakfast without giving me even a taste."

"You didn't give us any of the bird you caught," retorted Fluffy.

"Bird I caught! What d'you mean? When did I catch any bird?"

"Before we were awake. And you ate it all yourself, and never saved a bit for us."

"I don't know what you mean; don't know what you're talking about," blustered Yowler. "But I'm not going to argue with you. If you can catch things, so can I. And I can eat them all myself, too, just as much as you can." And he stalked away, and would not answer them when they called after him.

After that Yowler hunted by himself, and the other kittens by themselves. At first Jazbury found it very hard to catch anything. The birds and mice all got away from him. He would have had to go hungry or to content himself with grasshoppers and beetles if it had not been for

Fluffy. But Fluffy was such a good little hunter that he always managed to catch enough to eat, and whatever he caught he always shared with Jazbury. He was a better hunter than Yowler, and after a while Yowler said maybe they'd all better hunt together and share whatever they might catch. "Only, of course, Jazbury ought to let us have the best pieces," he added. "because he's no good about catching things."

"Yes, he is, too," mewed Fluffy indignantly. "He's learning. And anyway, I'd rather share with him than with you any day, and you can hunt by yourself, and we'll hunt by ourselves. That's the way you wanted us to do it at first, and now that's the way we like best."

This made Yowler very angry, and he would not speak to Fluffy for a whole day.

Jazbury, indeed, was becoming a very fine hunter,—better, even, than Fluffy himself. Fluffy was very skilful, but Jazbury was not

only quick, he was also strong and brave; stronger and braver than the gentle little Fluffy had ever dreamed of being.

Fluffy admired Jazbury very much, and was proud of the way he caught things. But one thing troubled him. Jazbury *would not* wash himself. Every day he grew dirtier and rougher, until at last he looked more like some wild creature of the wood than a little town kitten who should have known enough to wash and care for himself.

# VIII

FOR some time the weather was beautiful, clear and warm and sunny. But after about a week it changed. Clouds gathered. There was a feeling of rain in the air, and the wind was chilly. The kittens huddled close together at night for warmth. Yowler always took the warmest corner, the one furthest back in the tree where the leaves were thickest and softest.

In the daytime he went off on long prowls. Sometimes the other kittens did not see him from the time he set out in the morning till he came back at night. They no longer liked or trusted him, but it troubled them that he should stay away so much. One day Jazbury asked him

whether he wouldn't show them the way home. They were tired of staying in the woods, and he wanted to see his dear mother and his Aunt Tabby again. When Jazbury said this he felt so sad that he began to mew pitifully. Fluffy joined in, and the two little kittens cried bitterly. "Let's go home!" they cried. "Oh, let's go home. We don't want to stay here any longer."

"Hush!" cried Yowler angrily. "Oh, *hush!* I tell you I'm not going home. Not for a long time, anyway. You may go if you like, but I shan't."

"But we don't know the way! We don't know the wa-y-y-y!" wailed the kittens.

"Well, I can't help that," retorted Yowler, and he stalked away and left them still crying.

It was the very next night that a rain set in. Yowler had come home late. Jazbury and Fluffy had already cuddled down together in the tree, as far back as they could, for the night

was chilly and damp. But as soon as Yowler came he crowded them out of their snug nest and took it himself.

"Oh, Yowler! We just got that place warm!" mewed Fluffy.

"I don't care! You can get another place warm. This is where I am going to sleep."

"I don't think that's fair!" said Jazbury. But Yowler paid no attention to him. He curled down and soon was fast asleep.

It was not long after this that the rain began. It beat into the tree. "Oh, dear!" said Jazbury. "I'm getting so wet."

"Listen, Jazbury," whispered Fluffy. "Yowler has the only dry place here. Do you remember that sort of little cave I found today under that big rock? It isn't far away, and I'm sure we could keep dry there. It isn't very big. Not big enough for all of us to sleep in, but there would be plenty of room for you and me."

"All right," said Jazbury. "One thing's sure, we'll soon be dripping wet if we stay here."

The two little friends crept out of the hollow without wakening Yowler, and ran quickly over to the cave Fluffy had spoken of. It was indeed a cosy little cave and perfectly dry, really much better than the hollow of the tree. The two little kittens crept in and huddled down together.

Outside the rain beat. The leaves hung down from the trees, drenched and heavy with water; the ground was sodden, but the two little kittens cared nothing for all this.

All night they slept there as dry and comfortable as though they had been in their cellar at home instead of out in the wild wood with only a rock cave to shelter them.

The next morning Fluffy and Jazbury were awakened by a loud "Miaw-aw-aw! Miaw-aw-aw!" It was Yowler calling them.

"That's Yowler," said Fluffy. "He must have awakened."

Jazbury rose and stretched himself and stepped outside the cave. It had stopped raining; the sun was shining down through the leaves, but the woods were still wet.

"Here we are, Yowler," he called.

Yowler came over toward the cave. He was dripping wet.

"Where have you been all night?" he asked crossly. "What did you mean by going off without telling me? Look how wet I am! A mean trick, I call it."

"Well, Yowler, we thought you were dry," said Jazbury. "You took the only dry place there was, so we came over here."

"Dry place! I look as if I'd been in a dry place, don't I? I just guess not. Sopping wet I am."

*He turned on them so fiercely that they were frightened*

"Well, Yowler, we didn't know it," said Fluffy.

"Oh, be quiet. I don't care, anyway. I'm tired of the woods. I know a farmhouse near here where they want another cat, and I'm going there to live. I met a cat that lives there, and he asked me to come."

"Oh, but Yowler! What's going to become of us? Can we come, too?" cried Jazbury.

"No, you can't. They only want one cat. If you tried to tag along they'd drive us all away."

"But won't you show us the way home first?" begged Fluffy. "Please, please do. We're tired of the woods, too, but we don't know where else to go."

"Well, you find some place," said Yowler. "I did, so you can, too, if you try hard enough." With that he turned tail and stalked away through the wood.

Jazbury and Fluffy followed him, mewing, until he turned on them so fiercely that they were frightened. Then they stopped and stood looking after him until he disappeared in the wood, and never once did he look back, or say one word of good-bye to them.

# IX

"THERE! He's gone away mad," mewed Fluffy. "Now what shall we do?"

"Do! Why just what we have been doing," said Jazbury. "He wasn't any good to us, anyway."

"Yes, but I want to go home. Oh, I *do* want to go home; and we don't know the way."

"Why don't we? Guess I could find it just as well as Yowler."

"Oh, could you? Could you, Jazbury?"

"Listen, Fluffy!" said Jazbury. "There was something mother told me, and I'd forgotten all about it. I just remembered a little while ago. She said cats—and kittens, too, if they weren't too little—could always get home from any place

if they just didn't worry about it and try to remember the way to go. All they have to do is to love their home, and run along without thinking, and then they'll get there."

"I don't know what you mean," said Fluffy, "but let's go anyway. Even if we don't get home we can't be any more lost than we are now."

"But we *will* get there," declared Jazbury. "Come on! We might as well go right now."

"All right; I'm ready."

The two little kittens set out at once, and without any more talk about it. They trotted away through the green depths of the wood, and after a while the trees grew thinner, and then they came out of the wood upon a hot, sunny stretch of dusty road.

"We go this way," said Jazbury, and he set off down the road just as if he knew exactly where he was going.

"Are you sure this is the right way?" asked Fluffy.

"Now, Fluffy, you mustn't ask me that," said Jazbury. "I mustn't think about it, but just run along, and we'll get there. Don't you be afraid."

Fluffy said no more, but padded along after Jazbury. Jazbury never stopped or looked around. He just went running straight on down the dusty road.

After they had gone for quite a distance Fluffy heard a noise behind them, a thudding sound, and with it a sound of rumbling and rolling. He looked around, and there behind them came a great, enormous horse and a buggy, with two ladies driving in it.

"Jazbury," he mewed softly, "there's something coming."

Jazbury stopped and looked round. Then he ran over to the side of the road, and crouched

down. "Come over here till they get past, Fluffy," he said.

Fluffy trotted over and crouched down beside him.

Nearer and nearer came the horse and buggy, the horse thudding along and the buggy rumbling after it.

Just as the buggy came to where the kittens were one of the ladies cried out, "Oh, Sarah! Look there! Look at those kittens."

The buggy stopped, and the two ladies leaned forward, staring at Jazbury and Fluffy.

"How do you suppose they ever got here?" asked the lady.

"I don't know," answered her companion. "I suppose some one wanted to get rid of them and dropped them here."

"Isn't that wicked! What shall we do about it?"

The talking went on. The kittens could hear

*They were almost hidden by the dusty weeds*

the voices, one soft and gentle, the other quick and decided.

"Let's get down among the weeds, Fluffy," whispered Jazbury. "Then we can creep away."

The kittens ran, crouching, down into a dry gutter beside the road. There they were almost hidden by the dusty weeds.

"Oh, Sarah! They're running away!" cried the soft-voiced lady.

"I'll catch them!" said the other. She hastily clambered down from the buggy, and ran over to the side of the road and parted the weeds. When the kittens looked up they could see her big face above them looking down at them. Then her hands came down through the weeds, and caught them by the napes of their necks. One hand caught Jazbury and the other hand caught Fluffy. The hands lifted them out of the weeds and up into the air.

The kittens were very much frightened. Fluffy hung quietly, with his legs and tail curled up, and his head on one side, but Jazbury fought and struggled, and tried to scratch the hand that held him.

"Did you ever see such a little wildcat?" the lady called to her friend, as she carried the kittens back to the buggy.

"Here! Let's put them in a bag!" cried the other lady.

She dived down under the seat of the buggy and got out a big brown bag, and held it out with the mouth open ready for the kittens to be dropped into it.

A moment later and Fluffy and Jazbury found themselves in the bag, with the mouth of it tied tight, so that they could not possibly get out. The bag, with them in it, was laid in the back part of the buggy, and then the rumbling and thudding began again as the buggy drove

on. The kittens were jolted and shaken about.

"Oh, Jazbury!" mewed Fluffy. "What do you s'pose they're going to do with us?"

"I don't know. We'll have to try to get out."

Jazbury began to tear and bite at the loose threads of the bag, but he could not make even the least little hole in the bagging. After awhile he gave it up and began to mew loudly.

"Mew! Me-ew-ew-ew!" he cried.

"Mew-ew! Me-ew-ew-ew! Mew-ew-ew!" cried Fluffy.

The buggy rumbled and jolted. The kittens mewed and mewed. Now and then they stopped and listened. Then they could hear the voices talking up above them. Then they would mew again louder than ever.

After a while the buggy stopped, and the bag with the kittens in it was lifted out and carried into the house. The bag was opened again, and the two big faces looked in on them.

"Did you ever see anything as dirty as the black one?" said the lady who caught them. "I hated to touch him. I know one thing; if I'm going to keep him, the first thing I'm going to do is to give him a good scrubbing with tar soap."

"Oh, Sarah!" cried the other. "You oughtn't to wash cats. You'll make him sick. Get the white one out for me, won't you? I'm afraid to put my hand in. I'm afraid the black one will scratch me."

Miss Sarah put her hand down in the bag, and lifted Fluffy out and gave him to her companion.

"Isn't he too sweet?" cried that lady. "He doesn't look a bit dirty, either. I'm going to take him right over home and give him something to eat. I expect he's hungry."

After she had gone, Miss Sarah closed the bag and carried it a while and dumped it down again. Jazbury heard her call, "Bring me a basin of

*He spit and mewed and fought, but she held him there*

water out in the shed, Hannah, and that tar soap from up in the bathroom closet."

Jazbury did not know what the words meant, but they frightened him.

A little later the bag was untied again and turned upside down, and Jazbury was shaken out of it. Trembling and frightened, he looked about him. He was in a shed. Miss Sarah was there, and another woman with a checked apron on.

"Poor little thing! He looks scared to death," said the woman with the checked apron.

"I know," said Miss Sarah. "I just hate to wash him, but I can't take him into the house till he's clean."

Then a terrible thing happened to Jazbury. Miss Sarah stooped and picked him up, and before he could catch his breath she had put him in a basin of water. He spit and mewed and fought, but she held him there. She splashed

water over him, and she rubbed him with soap. She rubbed the soapsuds in around his ears, and over his forehead, and even down his little black nose. She soaped his legs and his body and his tail. Then she washed the soapsuds off. Last of all, she wrapped him in a towel and rubbed and rubbed and rubbed him.

By that time Jazbury was too miserable to fight. He only shivered and shook and mewed pitifully now and then.

"There!" said Miss Sarah at last. "That's about as dry as I can get you. You poor little thing! You shall have a good meal to comfort you."

She carried Jazbury into the house, and his fur was so clean that it fairly shone and glistened like black satin. "You're a real beauty," said Miss Sarah, "and I never would have guessed it when I picked you up in the road."

That's the way Jazbury began life in his new

home. It was a very pleasant home except for one thing; Miss Sarah would wash him every now and then.

He had plenty to eat and drink. There were soft chairs and sunny spots to sleep in, and as soon as he was used to the place, and Miss Sarah thought he would not run away, he was allowed to go out of doors whenever he wanted to.

The first day he was allowed to go out he found there was a flower garden in front of the house. It was a fine place to play. Paths wound about among the flower beds. Bees buzzed busily from bloom to bloom, and bright butterflies floated about overhead.

Jazbury examined it all over. There was a paling fence between it and the garden next door. When Jazbury came near this fence he saw a little furry white face peering through at him between the palings. It was Fluffy.

"Oh, Jazbury!" he called joyfully. "I was

watching for you. I hoped you'd come out soon."

"Why! did you know I lived here?"

"Yes. The lady that carried me away that day just took me in next door. I knew our yards were next to each other."

"Come on over," said Jazbury.

Fluffy squeezed through between the palings, and the two little kittens greeted each other joyfully. They rubbed noses and purred and purred. After that they began to play. They ran races along the paths, and tried to catch the butterflies, and had a fine time together.

At lunch time Fluffy had to go home, but he and Jazbury agreed to meet out in the garden every single day, unless it rained, and play together just as they used to do. It made Jazbury very happy to know he was to have his little friend living so near him.

# X

IT was a warm, sunny day in June.

The two little kittens had met as they often did, under a large blush rosebush in the garden. Jazbury did not seem as lively and playful as usual.

"What's the matter with you, Jazbury?" asked Fluffy. "You seem so quiet. Don't you want to play?"

"No."

"Why?"

Jazbury was silent for a moment. Then he said, "I've just had a bath again."

"Oh, Jazbury! Not again?"

"Yes, again. With water. And soap. And

rubbed afterward. You know. I told you all about it."

"But, Jazbury!" cried Fluffy. "What does she do it for? Of course you *were* dirty at first. You know you were. You really needed to be washed then. I don't believe you could have cleaned yourself, you were so *very* dirty. But you don't need to be bathed now."

"Course I don't. I wash and wash myself. I wash every day. I wash myself just as much as you do. And I'm not going to stand being *scrubbed* with water. No, I'm not.

"But what are you going to do about it?"

"I'll tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to run away. *I'm going home!*"

Fluffy started.

"Oh, Jazbury! You're not—not *really* going home? Where our mommas live?"

"Yes, I am. I'm going away tonight before she has a chance to wash me again."

"Oh, goody! goody!" cried Fluffy. "And I'll go, too. May I, Jazbury? I want to."

"All right. You meet me out here tonight when it's too dark for any one to see us. I'll be waiting for you."

The two little kittens were so excited over this plan that Jazbury grew quite cheerful again. How wonderful it would be to see their mothers again, and to play in their own back yards. They felt as though they could hardly wait to set out on their homeward journey.

# XI

IT was dark; the stars were in the sky, and the fireflies were flickering among the flowers of the garden when Jazbury and Fluffy met under the rosebush again.

"Are you there, Jazbury?" mewed Fluffy.

"Yes; waiting for you. Come on!"

The two little kittens stole down the garden path to the gate, and out into the road beyond.

"Are you sure you can find the way, Jazbury?" asked Fluffy.

"Now, Fluffy, you mustn't begin asking me that," said Jazbury. "If I begin thinking, we'll get lost. We've just got to go along the way I *feel* like going, and then we'll get there."

The kittens were silent after that. They

trotted along steadily through the starlit night. They had no trouble about keeping to the road, for kittens can see just about as well in the dark as in the light.

They came to the place where the ladies had found them that day that now seemed so long ago. After a while they passed a big white gate, and a long lane leading up toward a barn. There was a farm-house on beyond the barn. They heard a dog barking there.

"Oh, Jazbury! I hope that dog won't come and catch us," whispered Fluffy.

"Course he won't. He's too far away to see us."

The next moment the kittens stopped short, their little hearts leaping with terror. Something was moving stealthily among the weeds at the roadside. A dead twig cracked. There was a sound of breathing, and a gleam of big yellow eyes.

"What's that, Jazbury?" whispered Fluffy.

"Hus-s-sh! I don't know!"

There was a silence. "Jazbury, I'm scared. Let's get away," whispered Fluffy again.

"Hush, I tell you!"

The thing, whatever it was, was coming out from the weeds. Jazbury's tail grew big. His fur stood on end. The next moment a well-known yowl broke the stillness.

"Yowler!" cried Jazbury.

"Yeh! Yowler," answered that kitten, as he gave a leap out from among the weeds. "Hello, kits! I didn't know who you were until I heard you whispering together. Where are you bound for?"

"We're going home," said Jazbury. He was not at all glad to meet with Yowler again.

"Going home, are you! Well, now, that's not half bad. If you like, maybe I'll go along with you."

"But I thought you wanted to live on a farm," said Fluffy.

"Well, so I did, and I've been living there, but I don't have to stay in one place all the time."

"Don't you like it there?" asked Jazbury.

"Sure I did. Like it fine. Sure had a grand time. But I guess maybe the baker's looking for me, and I might as well go home. One place's just as good as another for me."

Neither Jazbury nor Fluffy wanted Yowler with them again, but they did not know how to tell him that.

"Well, let's go on," said Jazbury. "No use staying here all night."

As the three kittens trotted along through the starry darkness Yowler began to ask the kittens about where they had been living, how they had been treated, and what they had to eat.

"Had pretty good times, didn't you?" he said at last.

"Yes; but we like our own homes best?" mewed Jazbury.

Yowler was silent for a while. Then suddenly he burst out, "Tell you what! I said I liked it fine at the farm, but I didn't. They treated me mean. Never got a thing to eat but mice and rats, and had to catch everything for myself. They kept me in the barn, too, and if I even so much as poked my nose outside it the dog was after me. Wow! If I'd had a home like you two, catch me leaving it! But some kits have all the luck."

Fluffy and Jazbury felt quite sorry for Yowler. He must indeed have had a very hard time. But then, as Fluffy said to Jazbury later on, if he hadn't been so mean to them and run away and left them, he might have found a good home, too, just as they had, and have stayed there if he had chosen to.

# XII

MOTHER BUNCH and Aunt Tabby were sitting on the kitchen steps, feeling very sad.

It was a long time since little Jazbury had run away and left them, but they could not get used to being without him. Bitterly did they miss his fun and his liveliness and all his pretty ways.

"The quickest, strongest, handsomest kitten I ever had," said Mother Bunch.

"If I only hadn't boxed his ears that time," mourned Aunt Tabby, "maybe he wouldn't have run away."

"You mustn't let yourself think that," mewed Mother Bunch. "I guess we were both of us a little hard on him."

Suddenly there was a sound of scratching and scrabbling on the fence between the yard and the lot.

"Oh, if that were only little Jazbury," mewed Aunt Tabby sadly.

"Don't say that; you know it couldn't be," said Mother Bunch.

A moment later both cats sprang to their feet with a loud mew.

Above the top of the fence appeared a little black and white face, two white paws, a black body, a black tail waving like a flag. It was Jazbury.

He jumped down into the yard, and rushed up to his mother and Aunt Tabby. Fluffy followed him.

"Momma! momma!" he mewed. "Oh, Aunt Tabby! I'll never run away again. Oh, I'm so glad to be home!"

He and his mother and Aunt Tabby rubbed

noses, and the cats kissed Jazbury, cat fashion, and mewed aloud with joy.

"And little Fluffy, too!" cried Mother Bunch. "Oh, how glad your mother will be to have you home again. She's so unhappy about you."

None of them noticed, at first, that Yowler had followed the other two kittens into the yard, and was now sitting over near the fence grinning at them.

"It was very, very naughty of you to run away, Jazbury," said his aunt. "We've been worried to death about you."

"I know," mewed Jazbury, "and I'm so sorry. But I'll never do it again, Aunt Tabby. Indeed I won't."

"I suppose you ought to be punished," sighed his mother, "but I'm so glad to have you back again I haven't the heart to do it."

At that moment Aunt Tabby espied Yowler sitting there grinning at them.

"Did you go away with that Yowler cat?" she cried. "Did you, Jazbury? Tell me at once."

"Well, yes, I did."

"I knew it! It's all his fault. S-s-st! Gr-r-r-r! Get out of here, you bad cat!" And Aunt Tabby flew at Yowler so fiercely that he gave a wild miaw, and flew over the fence and disappeared from sight.

"And don't you ever dare to come back again," Aunt Tabby growled after him.

And Yowler never did. Maybe he went back to the baker's, and maybe he left the neighborhood in search of a better home, but at any rate Jazbury never saw him again.

And now Jazbury and the two cats settled down on the kitchen steps together, and Jazbury told his mother and Aunt Tabby all his adventures ever since that early morning when he had stolen away from home.

Little Fluffy had already climbed over into his own yard in search of his mother, so there were only the three of them.

The two older cats listened eagerly to Jazbury's tale. "And I'll tell you one thing, Aunt Tabby," mewed Jazbury as he ended his story, "I learned to keep myself clean while I was at Miss Sarah's. You needn't ever bother over that again."

"Well, that's a good thing," replied his aunt. "Almost worth running away for, I should say."

"I don't know about that," sighed his mother. "I don't know whether even that was worth all the unhappiness he gave us."

And Jazbury felt very sad at the thought of all the trouble he had caused.

That night the kitten slept in his own cellar again, with his dear mother and Aunt Tabby,

one on either side of him. How safe and warm and happy and sheltered he felt.

When his mother and Aunt Tabby awoke the next morning, however, Jazbury was no longer there.

"What *has* become of him?" mewed Aunt Tabby. "He surely can't have run away again."

"Oh, no! Never think such a thing," cried his mother. "He has just gone on upstairs. Let's go and find him."

The two cats hurried up the cellar steps together. They found the door at the top already open. As they entered the kitchen they saw Jazbury dragging something in from the shed beyond. Something that was too heavy for him to lift.

"Jazbury, what *have* you got there?" cried his mother.

*They saw Jazbury dragging something in from the shed beyond*

Jazbury dropped the thing and ran over to her. "It's the rat," he said.

"The rat!" cried Aunt Tabby. "Not the rat that lived in the shed, and that I've been trying to catch for such a long time!"

"Yes, that's the one," mewed Jazbury.

The cats could hardly believe him. They ran over and examined the rat all over, sniffing at it.

"But how ever did you manage to do it?" cried Aunt Tabby. "Why, the creature's almost as big as you are."

"Well, you see, I *had* to learn to catch big things in the wood," mewed Jazbury. "The rat didn't know that; he thought he could frighten me the way he had done before. So when I went out to the shed early—before you were awake—he came out to catch me; but I caught him, instead."

Then how his mother and Aunt Tabby praised and petted him! Not another kitten in the neighbourhood, not even Fluffy himself, could have done such a thing as that.

But Jazbury was not spoiled by their praises. "Any cat could have done it," he said, "if they could only have caught it. It was only because he thought he could frighten me that I had a chance to get him."

But from that time on Jazbury became famous as a mouser, and he kept himself so clean that when he grew up he was one of the handsomest cats in all the neighbourhood around.

THE END

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS
00025607284